

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Initially, Applicants would like to express appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided, for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Information Disclosure Statement by return of the Form PTO-1449, and for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Claim for Priority.

Applicants also acknowledge with appreciation the indication that claims 5-8 would be allowable if rewritten to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim (*see* paragraph 7 on page 5 of the Official Action).

Upon entry of the above amendments, claims 5-8 will have been amended, and claims 1-4 will have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein. Claims 5-8 are currently pending. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding objection and rejections, and allowance of all the claims pending in the present application.

In the Official Action, the Examiner objected to Figure 9 of the Drawings for containing foreign characters. In this regard, Applicants submit that Figure 9 of the drawings has been amended, where appropriate, in order to address the Examiner's concerns.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the objection to the Drawings is believed to be moot and should be withdrawn.

In the Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for being indefinite.

Initially, Applicants submit that the cancellation of claims 1-4 has made the above-noted rejection moot. Nevertheless, to the extent that the Examiner may assert that

a similar rejection applies to claims 5-8 which previously depended from claim 1, and without acquiescing to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, Applicants have amended claims 5-8 without using the and/or clause, which the Examiner addressed in the rejection of claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. § 112.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the rejection of claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, is believed to be moot and should be withdrawn.

In the Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP Document No. 2001-04934 to SASAKI et al. (SASAKI) in view of JP Document No. 2001-311846 to SHISHIDO et al. (SHISHIDO).

Without acquiescing to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, Applicants have amended claim 5 to generally incorporate the features of claim 1 (from which claim 5 previously depended). In this regard, Applicants submit that the Examiner indicated that claim 5, and claims 6-8 depending therefrom, would be allowable if claim 5 was rewritten to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim (*see* paragraph 7 on page 5 of the Official Action).

Thus, Applicants submit that claim 5, as well as claims 6-8 depending therefrom, have been placed in allowable form. Therefore, Applicants submit that it is not necessary to discuss the appropriateness of the above-listed rejection, and respectfully requests withdrawal of the same.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request an early indication of the allowance of all of the pending claims.

Further, Applicants expressly reserve the right to submit claims of a related scope in another application. Thus, the cancellation of claim 1-4 is without prejudice.

In view of the amendments and remarks herein, Applicants submit that independent claim 5 is in condition for allowance. With regard to dependent claims 6-8, Applicants assert that these claims are allowable on their own merit, as well as because of their respective dependencies from claim 5, which has been rewritten to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims in the present application are clearly patentable over the references cited by the Examiner, either alone or in combination, and an indication to such effect is respectfully requested, in due course.

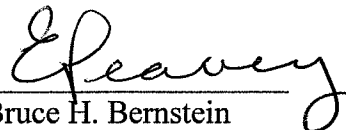
SUMMARY

Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance, and respectfully requests an indication to that effect. Applicants have argued the allowability of the claims. Accordingly, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action and allowance of the present application and all the claims therein are respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate.

Applicants note that this amendment is being made to advance prosecution of the application to allowance and should not be considered as surrendering equivalents of the territory between the claims prior to the present amendment and the amended claims. Further, no acquiescence as to the propriety of the Examiner's rejections is made by the present amendment. All other amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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Attachment: 1 Replacement Sheet of Drawings.